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Message Text

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PAGE 01 DUBLIN 00461 051701 Z

62
ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-09 H-02 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-12

RSR-01 /093 W
---------- 118778
R 051615 Z APR 73
FM AMEMBASSY DUBLIN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4555
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMCONSUL BELFAST

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E. O. 11652: N/ A
TAGS: PINT/ EI
SUBJECT: THOSE OTHER ELECTIONS

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS HAVE BEEN CALLED FOR MAY 30. MAJOR CANDIDATES ARE O' HIGGINS FOR FINE GAEL (PROBABLY WITH LABOR SUPPORT), AND PROBABLY CHILDERS FOR FIANNA FAIL. POLITICIANS CONSIDER O' HIGGINS FRONT-RUNNER. PRESIDENCY HAS NO POWER BUT SOME PRESTIGE. SENATORS, WHO ARE BEING ELECTED NOW, HAVE NEITHER. ELECTIONS FOR LOCAL COUNCILS DEFERRED TILL 1974. END SUMMARY .

2. POLITICAL POWER IN IRELAND IS MONOPOLY OF ONE INSTITUTION: THE DAIL. MAYORS, SENATORS, AND EVEN THE PRESIDENT PLAY MARGINAL ROLE. WHERE THERE IS PUBLIC INTEREST IN THEIR ELECTIONS, IT IS MAINLY BECAUSE RACES AFFECT PARTY PRESTIGE.

3. OUTSIDE GENERAL ELECTIONS FOR DAIL, PRESIDENTIAL RACE PROBABLY ATTRACTS MORE INTEREST THAN ANYOTHER, EVEN THOUGH OFFICE INVOLVES LITTLE EXCEPT PRESTIGE. NEW GOVT HAS JUST ANNOUNCED THAT NEXT PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS WILL BE HELD MAY 30 , JUST BEFORE DE VALERA' S TERM EXPIRES. FINE GAEL CANDIDATE IS T. F. O' HIGGINS, WHO HAD ALREADY ANNOUNCED HIS CANDIDACY BEFORE SURPRISE
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GENERAL ELECTIONS IN FEBRUARY. HE IS CONSIDERED TO BE FRONT- RUNNER, PARTLY BECAUSE HE ALMOST UPSET DE VALERA IN ELECTIONS OF 1966. LABOR PARTY WILL PROBABLY ENDORSE O' HIGGINS' CANDIDACY, BUT HAS NOT DONE SO YET. FIANNA FAIL LET IT BE KNOWN APRIL 4 THAT THEY HAD ASKED ERSKINE CHILDERS, FORMER DEPUTY PM, TO ACCEPT THEIR NOMINATION. CHILDERS HAS LONG BEEN A LIKELY CANDIDATE BUT HAS BEEN VISIBLY RELUCTANT TO GIVE UP ACTIVE POLITICS FOR " THE PARK" (PRESIDENTIAL RESIDENCE IN PHOENIX PARK). HE CAN HARDLY REFUSE PARTY' S OFFER, HOWEVER. HE IS LESS ATTRACTIVE POLITICIAN THAN O' HIGGINS, BUT IS RESPECTED AND COMPETENT AND WILL PROBABLY PUT UP GOOD RACE. HE IS A PROTESTANT, AND FIANNA FAIL MEMBERS THINK OF THIS AS A MINOR ECUMENICAL GESTURE TOWARDS NI. BOTH O' HIGGINS AND CHILDERS ARE SONS OF PROMINENT POLITICANS WHO WERE ON OPPOSITE SIDES IN IRISH CIVIL WAR. BOTH, HOWEVER, ARE MEN WHO WOULD PREFER TO BURY OLD FEUDS. CONVENTIONAL WISDOM IS THAT NO FIANNA FAIL CANDIDATE SHORT OF EX- PM LYNCH HIMSELF COULD BEAT O' HIGGINS, AND LYNCH UNDERSTANDABLY PREFERS TO RETAIN HIS MORE MEANINGFUL JOB AS LEADER OF OPPOSITION.

4. SENATE ELECTIONS ARE ALREADY IN PROCESS, PROBABLY UNKNOW TO MOST OF IRISH PUBLIC. IN THEORY, SENATE REPRESENTS VOCATIONAL INTERESTS. A FEW SENATORS-- ESPECIALLY FROM UNIVERSITIES-- DO MAKE SERIOUS CONTRIBUTION TO IRISH POLITICS. MOST, HOWEVER, ARE POLITICIANS WHO COULD NOT MAKE IT INTO DAIL, AND SENATE PARTY COMPOSITION CLOSELY FOLLOWS THAT IN DAIL. VOTES WILL BE COUNTED BEGINNING MAY 1, AND IMPORTANT SURPRISES ARE UNLIKELY.

5. ELECTIONS FOR LOCAL COUNCILS HAVE BEEN POSTPONED FOR SECOND TIME, WITH NEW GOVT EXPLAINING THAT THERE HAVE ALREADY BEEN TOO MANY ELECTIONS AND REFERENDA IN PAST FEW MONTHS. EXPLANATION HAS CONSIDERABLE LOGIC, AND POSTPONEMENT IS ATTRACTING LITTLE OPPOSITION. THERE IS, HOWEVER, SOME LOCAL INTEREST IN ELECTIONS FOR CITY COUNCILS, WHICH HAVE LIMITED AUTHORITY ON REGIONAL MATTERS. ELECTIONS ARE NOW EXPECTED TO BE HELD IN JUNE 1974.
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*** Current Handling Restrictions *** n/a
*** Current Classification *** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts:
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 05 APR 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: boyleja
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973DUBLIN00461
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: n/a
Errors: n/a
Film Number: n/a
From: DUBLIN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730435/aaaahsjo.tel
Line Count: 119
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: boyleja
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 01 AUG 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <01-Aug-2001 by reddocgw>; APPROVED <23-Aug-2001 by boyleja>
Review Markings:

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EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: <DBA CORRECTED> gwr 971202
Subject: THOSE OTHER ELECTIONS
TAGS: PINT, EI
To: BELFAST
EUR
LONDON
SECSTATE WASHDC
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

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